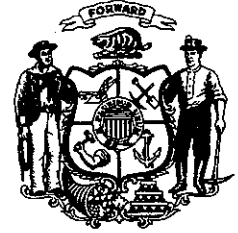


State Representative **Spencer Black**



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STATEMENT BY REPRESENTATIVE SPENCER BLACK AB 245--SHUTTING THE REVOLVING DOOR

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND ETHICS, JUNE 2, 2009

Chair Hebl and Committee Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you regarding AB 245. This bill prohibits a legislator from becoming a lobbyist for 12 months after leaving office.

Current state law places a one-year waiting period on top state officials before they can become lobbyists. However, the current law exempts legislators from this restriction.

It is time to end this special treatment for legislators. It is also time to shut the revolving door between government and special interests that this exception allows.

The revolving door harms citizens' trust in their government. It is unseemly to have a person who is a legislator one day come back the next to lobby his or her former colleagues on behalf of a special interest. A legislator shouldn't be voting one day on legislation that impacts special interests and then turn around and earn a big salary the next day lobbying for that same special interest group.

Twenty five other states, in addition to the United States Congress, already have rules requiring a year or more before legislators can become lobbyists.

Our state used to lead the nation when it came to ethics laws. In this case, we sure don't. This bill would help us reclaim our once proud Wisconsin reputation for good government.





JULIE LASSA

STATE SENATOR

Assembly Committee on Judiciary and Ethics

Assembly Bill 245

Tuesday, June 2, 2009

413 North, State Capitol

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on Assembly Bill 245, of which I am proud to be lead sponsor in the Senate.

Democracy is about trust. When people believe their government is faithfully representing them and upholding the law, a democracy is strong enough to meet any challenge. But when people lose that trust, democracy falters.

AB 245 represents an important step toward restoring the trust the people of Wisconsin once had in their government. The bill places a one-year time restriction on legislators who leave the legislature to lobby, and establishes fines of up to \$5,000 per offense and up to six months imprisonment. This is the third session in which this bill has been introduced, in the 2005 session by former state Representative Freese, and by Representative Black in 2007 and this session. Last session the Senate version passed both the Senate Ethics Committee and the full Senate by overwhelming, bipartisan majorities.

Current state law places a one year waiting period on most former state officials who wish to become lobbyists, but exempts legislators. It is only fair that legislators be held equally accountable to their constituents as other state officials are to their posts. When legislators retire to lobbying jobs, it raises quite legitimate concerns among their constituents as to whether those legislators have been representing their future employers, and not them. The "revolving door" of government and special interests should be closed to protect the integrity of the legislature.

By helping to establish a firewall between private and public interests, AB 245 will provide citizens with a measure of assurance that the legislature is only working to promote the best interests of the public and the State of Wisconsin.